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AUTHOR Johnston, William J.; Pyecha, John N.
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ABSTRACT

This paper outlines an attempt to include analysis of political, economic, and social considerations within a study of the feasibility of a school district merger in Guilford County, North Carolina. The paper is divided into three sections, the first of which discusses major conditions in each of three school districts in the county. Two of these districts are urban and city-run (High Point City and Greensboro); the third is rural and county-run. Merger of the districts has been an issue for at least a decade; each experienced declining enrollments, and the two city systems have been faced with increasing proportions of minority students as whites move into the county system following suburban development. Furthermore, the distribution of lower SES students is not equitable between the districts, which creates conditions of unequal resource needs and curricular requirements. Section II describes the research strategies used and major issues addressed in the study. The study consisted of two phases: Phase I identified the range of issues and questions surrounding merger among county and city residents, and Phase II addressed these issues in light of mergers in other places. The five study questions adopted concerned: costs; community schools; administrative centralization; declining enrollments and changing tax bases and pupil populations; and unified commitment to education. Section III summarizes major recommendations and the methodology used to disseminate study findings. Reasons for the research group's recommendations of merger into a single system are discussed. (KH)

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School District Merger in Metropolitan Areas: Report of a Feasibility Study in North Carolina

by

William J. Johnston
University of North Carolina-Wilmington

and

John N. Pyecha
Research Triangle Institute

for

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POST OFFICE BOX 12194 RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NORTH CAROLINA 27709

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School District Merger in Metropolitan Areas:
Report of a Feasibility Study in North Carolina

Bill Johnston
University of North Carolina-Wilmington

John N. Pyecha
Research Triangle Institute

Many large and medium sized school districts are currently faced with the problem of: (1) declining tax base, largely as a consequence of shifts in residential population to suburban and county areas; (2) declining student enrollment as a consequence of residential shifts and declining tax base; and (3) rising proportions of minority and lower SES students remaining in the city area. One partial solution to these problems is merger of city school districts with surrounding county districts (i.e., the non-city portion of the same county). This is a highly politically charged alternative and one generally resisted by county residents for a variety of reasons (Sher, 1977). Among the reasons commonly identified are: (1) county school districts enjoy relatively favorable conditions in which revenue growth through property taxes exceeds student average daily membership (ADM) changes; (2) county residents fear possible decline in academic standards as district merger leads to extensive minority or lower SES student transfer to predominantly majority suburban and county schools; (3) many county residents also fear that merger will lead to school consolidation which may in turn reduce neighborhood school policy; and (4) residents of both the city and county school districts often fear that merger to a single district will create a large bureaucratized school administration which may become overcentralized, fragmented, inefficient, and unresponsive to student needs.

Proponents of merger often argue that: (1) the ability to attract and hold new industry to both the city and county is hampered by the perception of dual school systems; (2) merger can lead to administrative efficiencies; (3) rising minority and lower SES percentages in the city will lead to increased white and bright flight, and ultimately to decline in the political, economic, and social well being of the city; and (4) maintaining separate school systems serves to inhibit development of cohesive community identity. As a consequence of these types of concerns, determination of the appropriateness of the merger strategy must include recognition of broad political,

economic, and social consequences, as well as a more narrow focus on traditional educational issues of student achievement, curriculum, finance, and organizational structure. Merger feasibility studies which ignore broader contextual issues are not likely to exhibit significant influence in the policy formation arena, and where recommendations for merger are adopted, are unlikely to lead to successful merger implementation efforts.

This report outlines the attempt of the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) to include analysis of political, economic, and social considerations within a study of the feasibility of merger in Guilford County, North Carolina. Section I provides discussion of major conditions in each of the three school districts in the county at the time of the study. Section II describes the research strategies and major issues addressed. Section III summarizes major recommendations and the methodology used to disseminate study findings.

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY AREA

Guilford County contains three independent school districts; two city units, High Point City with 9,000 students and Greensboro City with 22,000 students, and a county unit of 24,000 students (the county unit is that portion of the county that is not included in either of the two city districts). Merger of the three school systems has been a recurrent issue for the past decade. The state of North Carolina has long supported merger of school systems to one administrative unit per county. During the 1985 legislative session, for example, a bill was introduced (later tabled) authorizing state financial support for only one administrative unit per county. Since approximately 70 percent of school funds are derived from the state, such legislative action would effectively limit the ability of counties to maintain multiple districts. Further, within the state, most other city/county units of similar size have merged into a single system. The total population of Guilford County in 1980 was 317,154, which represented an increase of about 4 percent over a five-year period. With a land area of 651 square miles and a population of 487.2 persons per square mile, it is a large and relatively densely populated county.

Local political and economic leaders are aware that Guilford County has recently been surpassed by Wake County in residential and economic growth rate. (Wake County, a North Carolina county that is similar in size and demo-

graphics to Guilford County, merged to a single county-wide school district in 1975-76.) Moreover, the traditional economic bases of one of the city systems in Guilford County (i.e., High Point) have been in decline. (The major industries in High Point are textiles and furniture.) Political and economic leaders (especially in the two city systems), motivated by a concern about the potential decline in the quality of the city school systems and the impact that such a decline might have on the ability to attract new industry to the area, have encouraged merger. The County Commissioners responded to these expressed concerns, as well as to similar concerns raised by school administrators, by contracting with RTI to conduct a merger feasibility study. This action received only moderate support from county residents, who generally opposed merger.

Conditions in the three school systems studied varied along important dimensions. These conditions will be briefly described below.

According to 1980 Census data, about three-fourths of the total population in Guilford County lives in urbanized areas (1980 Census of Population and Housing). Ninety-eight percent of the population of Greensboro and High Point school districts live in urbanized areas, whereas only about 41 percent of the Guilford school district population live in such areas (57 percent live in rural non-farm areas, and 2 percent live on rural farms).

Each of the systems has experienced declining enrollments over the past nine years--a situation which is expected to continue for the next 5 to 6 years, then level off for 1 or 2 years before shifting upward slightly. Enrollment decline affects state allocated ADM monies and raises the need for some school closings. The city systems have generally been more willing to close schools than the county system.

The two city systems have also been faced with increasing proportions of minority students as white students move into the county system following suburban development. While it is recognized that some of this movement is attributable to white flight, the predominant belief is that race has not been a major factor of recent residential shifts. Instead, the attractiveness of new home construction in suburban developments is seen as primary. Currently both city systems contain about 50 percent minority student ratios; the county is about 15 percent minority. The minority percentage in both city systems has been increasing at a rate of about 1 to 2 percent per year and is expected to continue.

The employment rate for the total county's civilian labor force varies from 94 to 96 percent in the three school districts (1980 Census of Population and Housing). However, the average income in High Point is significantly lower than those of Guilford County and Greensboro City. Greensboro has the greatest percentage of persons in professional occupations and has the highest mean income of residents.

High Point has consistently had the largest, and Guilford the lowest, percentage of students receiving free or reduced-priced lunches (RTI, 1985:3.21). In the first month of the 1984-85 school year, more than one-third of High Point's students qualified for free or reduced-price lunches, one-fourth qualified in Greensboro, and less than one-fifth in Guilford.

Greensboro serves a significantly greater proportion of handicapped and academically gifted students than either of the other two systems (the percentages in these two categories are significantly higher than state percentages) (RTI, 1985:3.21). Moreover, since the percentages of exceptional children in all three systems exceed the maximums for which the state will provide funding, these added costs must be covered by local funds. (The average cost of educating exceptional children in North Carolina is about one and one-half times that for regular students.)

About half of the students in High Point in 1984-85 qualified for Chapter 1 remedial programs by virtue of scoring below the 50th percentile on the California Achievement Test (CAT). The percentages in Greensboro and Guilford were much smaller, ranging from 11 to 20 percent.

When the three systems are compared on the results of state mandated competency tests that were administered in the 11th grade in the fall of 1982, 1983, and 1984, higher percentages of first-time takers in Guilford passed (RTI, 1985:3.28). In general, the percentage of first-time takers that passed the test was slightly higher for High Point than for Greensboro. An analysis of CAT results for students in each of the systems indicate that scores in each system were above the national average in 1982-83 and 1983-84; the scores in Greensboro and Guilford have been above the national average since 1979-80.

The general conclusion of this review of conditions is that Guilford County is a metropolitan area containing two major cities within the state. The demographic distribution of minority and lower SES students is not equitable between school districts, which creates conditions of unequal resource

need and, often times, curricular requirements. This may be used as justification to maintain existing district divisions. These same differences, however, place demands on the two city systems that are very difficult to meet given existing district divisions. Moreover, maintaining separate districts serves to inhibit social recognition of the commonality of interests among all residents living in the county; it contributes to feelings of "them and us." This of course is socially disunifying. Further, the social memory of political conflict between county and city residents regarding such issues as annexation of land from county to city and distribution of tax revenues appears to have been transferred to the issue of school district merger. That is, the memory of political conflict appears to have created a predisposition toward opposition to merger irrespective of the issues surrounding merger.

II. RESEARCH STRATEGY AND MAJOR ISSUES

A. Research Strategy

The RTI research team included persons with background in political science, sociology, law and educational administration, finance, and politics. It was assumed that, given the entrenchment of conflicting interests in the study area, political and social factors were as significant as educational factors in determining the policy relevance of study recommendations. As a consequence, the research team concluded that in order for local residents to be able to attend to the educational factors relative to merger, they must believe that all major political positions had been allowed an opportunity to influence the determination of study questions and that the study would not represent narrow political interests. The overall research strategy was to proceed in two phases. Phase I research efforts were directed toward obtaining input from local citizens, political and economic leaders, and school personnel. A total of 81, one-hour interviews were conducted and analyzed. The purpose of these interviews was to identify the range of issues and questions surrounding merger among county and city residents. The issues and questions identified in Phase I became the core questions addressed during Phase II. Additional issues identified by the research team as significant to determination of the feasibility of merger were added to this list of core issues. The method of addressing issues during Phase II included: a literature review; interviews with persons in other merged school districts, state

legislators, and state department of instruction personnel; and primary data analysis of system level data (e.g., facilities utilization, school ADM, racial balance, projected enrollment, etc.). In retrospect, the heavy use of interviewing appears to have been a good choice. Especially, since we found that members of the public and some administrators appears to have a fundamental mistrust of published, technical research reports and, concomitantly, have a bias in favor of the practical value of the opinions of practitioners. Published reports are easily dismissed as being "Ivory Tower" and impractical; the opinions of practitioners are often granted face validity without regard to issues of generalizability or selective perception. Where interview data is consistent with findings emerging from sound research reports, the use of interview data can be persuasive.

B. Issues

Many of the issues identified in Phase I and addressed by the research team in Phase II are of only local interest and will not be discussed here. Other issues identified are of more general interest and will be briefly described below.

1. Costs

Typically, proponents of merger in metropolitan areas have suggested that larger units can reduce costs due to economies of scale through savings in purchasing, personnel utilization at the administrative levels, maintenance, and transportation. Research by Sher (1977) has challenged the overstatement of benefit emerging from merger; especially cost savings associated from transportation. Sher found that in many merged districts transportation costs increased dramatically and offset savings obtained in other areas. Our review of merged systems in the state indicate that total expenditures for a school system generally increased following merger (RTI, 1985:D.13). In metropolitan areas the reasons for this increase, however, appear to be related more to the politics of merger than to the structural factors inherent in a large system. For example, salaries of the instructional staff are generally leveled up to the prevailing rate at the more expensive system rather than leveled down. The best programs in both systems are expanded to be available to all students of the merged system. This frequently increases costs. Further, merger often provides the critical mass of students necessary to justify creating organizationally distinct programs; programs which may not

have been offered in either system prior to merger. In essence, the bargaining process necessary to accomplish merger results in creation of a significantly better program but at slightly higher cost. Disaggregation of costs generally indicate that it is not structural conditions of merged organization that increase costs but rather expansion of programs and raising salaries.

Opponents of merger typically identify an expected increase in overall costs as a negative feature of merger without reference to expected programming benefits. They are also more likely to identify decline of the community school concept and administrative centralization as significant features of merger. These issues are of inherent substantive interest to researchers and, perhaps more important, may become symbolic issues of public debate by merger opponents during the merger adoption process. These issues will be addressed more fully below.

2. Community Schools

Parents and school administrators in each of the systems generally wish to avoid mandatory busing to achieve racial balance and want to assign students to schools nearest their home. It was feared that merger would necessitate increased cross-town busing to achieve racial balance. We believe merger would not lead to increased busing and would improve attainment of community school policy objectives. The courts and the U.S. Justice Department have taken the position that (in the absence of clear intention to segregate) desegregation plans (e.g., busing) which exceed the mandates of the Constitution will not be required. Further, adopting a prevailing educational policy (e.g., community school assignment) in pursuit of educationally sound objectives is permissible, even if some resegregation by race does occur. Reorganization to a single district allows student assignment to geographically appropriate schools unhindered by artificial district boundaries (RTI, 1985:AppE).

3. Administrative Centralization

Another issue is related to administrative centralization, bureaucratization, and local school autonomy. Especially in the county, there is fear of centralized administration and possible loss of school autonomy. We found that within North Carolina, the potential for centralization of administrative power in the superintendent is more common in smaller school systems. In large school systems, the magnitude of issues addressed requires delegation of authority. Such administrative decentralization (which is distinct from

political decentralization) commonly takes one of two forms: (a) authority delegated to assistant superintendents differentiated by functional unit (e.g., finance, personnel, curriculum), and (b) adoption of an area superintendent structure (RTI, 1985: Appendix J). The area superintendent is a generalist with decision authority within a geopolitical area; policy formation authority remains, however, centered in the school board and superintendent. Merger does create a larger administrative unit; however, examination of other merged systems in North Carolina that value administrative decentralization reveal important conclusions. One is that building level autonomy often increases following merger. Central administrators often lack the time or interest in managing building level affairs. Second, especially with the area superintendent structure, community level participation is likely to increase. The larger system has the resources to expand programs while the area superintendent is still perceived as accessible and responsive to community needs. Finally, it is important for central office administrators to recognize that the general public tends not to remember organizational charts and formal areas of specialization of school personnel. Instead, the public generally identifies the superintendent with the school system. Most superintendents are accessible to the public; what varies is the public perception of accessibility. It is important that the superintendent of a large system remain highly visible in the public's image, especially during periods of organizational transition.

4. Declining Enrollments and Changing Tax Bases and Pupil Populations

While issues addressed above are important in determining the feasibility of merger, the central issues from an educational perspective are related to declining enrollments, declining tax base, and increasing minority and lower SES students in the city systems. These issues will be addressed below relative to the study area.

Declining enrollment is a serious problem in North Carolina because a large proportion of public school funding comes from the state and is based directly on the ADM of students in the school system (N.C. State Board of Education, 1985). Also, county-wide tax funds are allocated to school districts within the county based on ADM. All three systems have experienced a continued decline in enrollment since the 1975-76 school year. Reductions in the amount of money received from the state (and from some federal sources) as a result of these declines are difficult to absorb, since school system

operating costs are not reduced in direct proportion to the loss of ADM. In addition, declining enrollment can reduce enrollments in individual schools to the extent that it becomes difficult and expensive to offer specialized courses. Both of these problems are likely to be most acute in High Point because it is a relatively small system and has a high percentage of students who need high-cost and/or compensatory programs. Greensboro will be affected more than Guilford, but less than High Point.

The High Point system has the largest percentage of residents who are at the lower socioeconomic levels, followed by Guilford and Greensboro. These differences in population characteristics are reflected in the characteristics of students in each of the school systems. Greensboro and High Point, the two systems with the highest proportions of minority residents, serve significantly larger percentages of economically and/or educationally deprived students. It appears that these differences, especially as they exist between Guilford and the two city systems, will become greater in the future. Projected patterns of residential growth in the county suggest that the percentages of minority residents in Greensboro and High Point will increase, that the average socioeconomic status (SES) level in High Point will remain low when compared to Greensboro and Guilford, and that the average SES level in Guilford will increase (while the percentage of minority residents remains relatively stable).

This imbalance between systems in social class and minority racial status has social and academic implications. Related to these differences in school populations are the phenomena of suburban and white flight. The problem for the school systems is that a tipping point is usually reached as the white flight accelerates. The consequence is a city-to-county movement of taxable wealth, accelerated decline in urban student enrollments, accelerated increase in urban per-pupil instructional costs, loss of support for the schools by the "power structure" (i.e., young, affluent, involved, enthusiastic, politically astute persons), and eventual decline in the quality of public education.

Also, research indicates that: (a) minority students who have been educated in segregated schools generally move into segregated environments in adult society; (b) attending desegregated schools improves the attitudes of blacks and whites toward future interracial situations; (c) lower SES is associated with lower achievement among both minority and non-minority groups (findings of lower academic achievement among minority racial groups tend to

be based upon the economic status of those groups in society and not upon any characteristics inherent in race or ethnicity); (d) students from lower-SES backgrounds are generally more expensive to educate since smaller pupil/teacher ratios are required for them to achieve academically at the same rate as students from middle- and upper-SES backgrounds; and (e) when lower-SES students are integrated into schools and classrooms with predominantly middle- and upper-SES students, larger pupil/teacher ratios appear to be adequate to maintain achievement rates for all students (Crain and Mahard, 1982; Scott, 1981; Cook, 1984).

Although the research has not established hard-and-fast rules regarding the optimal mix of minority or lower-SES students in a student population, most findings support the following general rule of thumb: schools are able to absorb up to about 35 to 40 percent minority or lower-SES students without affecting the development of positive school climates or modification to norms of academic excellence; levels of 40 to 50 percent are generally considered to be the breakpoint in which culture begins to change; and, conversely, minority student ratios which fall below about 20 to 30 percent may have negative academic consequences for minorities through leading to feelings of isolation, loss of group identity, and stereotyping.

The issue of declining tax base for both city systems is also important. Local funds pay for instructional services beyond the base state support, as well as for the larger portion of maintenance and operations expenses. Research has shown that there is a high correlation between the level of local per-pupil expenditures and most indicators of quality. In the three systems under consideration, 33 to 36 percent (compared to a state average of 25 percent) of the current expenditure monies come from local sources (primarily property and sales taxes).

There is a strong likelihood that High Point (and, to a lesser extent, Greensboro) will face a severe challenge over the next decade in trying to maintain high-quality educational programs as enrollments decline, the proportions of students with special needs increase, and residential growth expands out into the Guilford School District. High Point has a larger percentage of students from economically and educationally deprived backgrounds (followed by Greensboro, with Guilford last). Students with low-SES backgrounds are typically more expensive to educate, since there is a higher probability that

they will require special education, tutorial, alternative, or dropout programs that students from higher-SES environments. The two city systems have been able to levy higher supplemental tax rates than Guilford in order to support their school systems; however, as the tax base shifts to Guilford, this will become increasingly difficult to do and one or more of the three systems may be hard pressed to keep from making major reductions in the quality of education programs.

5. Unified Commitment to Education

There is one additional issue that has not yet been clearly addressed. That is, the need for a unified commitment to education by residents throughout the three systems. There are important historical explanations for the development of separate school systems within a county. Current conditions, however, may indicate that continuation of separateness is dysfunctional for the attainment of basic educational goals. Historically, city school districts in North Carolina were developed to provide for the special needs of urban populations. City units were generally more heavily funded than county units, and were usually viewed as being superior in quality. However, as people (and businesses) moved to the suburbs, the "power structure" turned toward upgrading the county units. Only since the 1970's has the interrelatedness of the urban, suburban, and rural areas (and their school units) been recognized. In an era of economic uncertainty, generally characterized by keen competition between counties and regions for economic development, it is necessary that the total community be united in attempting to address education problems.

Guilford County fits very well into this pattern. Although it is basically a metropolitan area, elements of its rural background (and a certain amount of distrust between the two cities) remain. Its citizens have tremendous pride in their respective school systems; however, when this pride is focused on a relatively narrow community level and combined with competition for a limited pool of local funds, it can have an adverse effect on providing all students in the county with an equal opportunity for high-quality education. Given the uncertainties associated with such factors as long-range enrollment projections, efforts to attract industry and bolster the economic development of the county, future residential growth patterns, future federal funding policies, and the potential acceleration of private school enrollments resulting from "white flight" and/or federal decisions regarding educational

vouchers and tax credits, it is essential for continued growth and well-being of the schools that the public recognize the interrelatedness of rural, suburban, and urban interests and work together for the common good. The impact of unified commitment to education is difficult to measure. Nevertheless, interviews with school administrators in North Carolina school systems that had experienced merger indicated unanimous agreement that following the transition to merger public support and commitment to education surpassed levels prior to merger. The educational benefit of this support was to create a positive attitude toward the total school system and reinforce among students that schooling and high achievement were important and valued by the community.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS AND METHODOLOGY FOR DISSEMINATING STUDY FINDINGS

The RTI study team considered three major options for reorganization of the school districts in Guilford County: maintain the three systems with realignment of district boundaries, merger into two systems, and merger into a single system. The recommendation of RTI was merger into a single system. The primary weakness of various three system plans was that there was no satisfactory way to meet the identified needs of the total student population through either maintaining the status quo or redrawing school district boundaries. Given existing patterns of student enrollment decline, shifts in the tax base, and the increasing proportions of minority and lower SES students in the two cities, to maintain the status quo is to perpetuate existing problems for the city school districts. The consequence could be the creation of a dual school system differentiated by race, class, and student achievement. This would contradict expressed community values for high quality, equitable educational opportunities for all students. Redrawing existing school district boundaries (e.g., make city municipal and school system boundaries coterminous) would be beneficial, at least in the short run, for the cities. This would create, however, a very difficult situation for the county. As matters currently stand, the county can afford the costs of transportation for low population density, rural students by the presence of high density, suburban students.

The primary weakness of two-system plans was that given the distribution of wealth and student population (numbers of students, SES characteristics and

minority status) no equitable and sensible two-system plan could be formulated. Two-system dimensions along natural boundaries (e.g., major highways dividing the county either north-south or east-west) created unbalances in student population, racial and SES mix, and tax base. Four two-system alternatives were considered and all were found to be unsatisfactory. Further, all multi-system plans perpetuated separation of identity and support for education among the systems. The opinion of RTI was that adoption of a multi-system plan was at best a stop-gap measure and would be impractical.

Merger to a single system has a number of advantages. For example, creation of a single system has been found to improve programming and community support for education in other North Carolina systems, and it is likely that merger to a single system would have a similar effect on education in Guilford County. When compared to the other organization structures considered in the study, merger provides greater flexibility in allocating county-wide funds, assigning pupils and personnel, achieving racially and academically mixed schools, and equalizing educational opportunities for students throughout the county. Also, it provides greater flexibility for better utilizing existing facilities, planning the building of new facilities, expanding and enhancing instructional programs and services, and developing a consistent grade-level organizational pattern. Finally, merger should result in a more unified responsibility for education in the county, and provide for better balance of wealth and school enrollments (in terms of both size and demography) between cities and surrounding suburbs, greater specialization among administrative staff, better utilization of instructional and support personnel, and greater opportunity for centralizing administrative practices and functions in order to improve operations and/or reduce costs.

The findings of the RTI study team were presented to the superintendents of each of the school systems in an iterative fashion. That is, superintendents first received, and were asked to respond to, an introductory chapter and summary of Phase I findings. Second, they received, and responded to, data and analysis chapters and related appendixes. Finally, they received the recommendations chapter. This strategy of presenting findings was selected to increase the opportunity of central office staff to attend to the data and analysis underlying the recommendations, rather than merely to the recommendations themselves. Moreover, data do not "speak for themselves," they must be interpreted and understood. The initial presentation of data without

recommendations allowed the superintendents to formulate their own conclusions without interference from the study team, and allowed the RTI staff to clarify sections of the report as necessary to avoid misunderstanding.

Study findings and recommendations were made public at a formal presentation attended by community leaders and the news media. At this meeting, summary copies of the full report were made available and each of the principle authors of the report made summary presentations. These summary presentations focused on two areas. One focused on school level and community data leading to the recommendations. The other addressed primary community concerns identified during Phase I of the study (e.g., neighborhood schools, administrative centralization, school level autonomy). This form of presentation served two purposes. First, by addressing existing community concerns, the study team was able to allay some community concerns and correct some misconceptions (e.g., merger would lead to busing or merger would lead to loss of neighborhood schools). Second, by identifying school and community trends indicated by the data, the presentation served to alert the broader community to potential problems and solutions. In this regard the RTI study team was able to use the emotionally charged community attitude toward merger, and the resultant media coverage of study recommendations, to increase the level of public awareness of actual conditions. In the context of the study site, the interjection of factual data into what had heretofore been primarily a political debate, which was characterized by assumption and fear pitted against retrenched interests and opinion, was a significant contribution.

In many communities the issue of merger of school districts elicits primarily an emotional response from the public. Since the public is often required to participate (through the election process) in the determination of whether merger will be attempted, it is important that the public be well informed regarding central issues. Further, since social science data are seldom self explanatory, it is incumbent upon researchers to make the data as accessible as possible. This may require preparing the audience attitudinally to attend to the data and not merely the conclusions. Moreover, with issues like merger, the public has often formed preconceptions and opinions on the basis of incomplete and often incorrect information. In such cases the task is one of overcoming an established position in order to allow consideration of alternative information and positions. In summary, the task of the researcher is not only to attend to the socio-political context in which

research will be utilized but to organize and present findings in a manner which will avoid misunderstanding and increase public understanding of events.

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